

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for ordering a product, comprising:

receiving a request for an order via a communications network, the order including a product code and a customer identification, the product code identifying a product to be purchased, the customer identification identifying a  
5 customer;

retrieving a customer price for the product, the customer price being based on a predetermined pricing function that is associated with the customer identification; and

providing a commission to an agent associated with a unique manufacturer of the product, the commission being determined based on a predetermined commission function.  
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2. The method of claim 1, where the customer identification further comprises an account number, the account number being associated with a distributor of the product or with a financial institution where the customer has a financial account, the predetermined pricing function comprising a product price associated with the product code and a mark-up factor associated with the customer identification, and the retrieving of the customer price further comprising retrieving the product price based on the product code and  
15 retrieving the mark-up factor based on the account number.  
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3. The method of claim 1, where the providing of the commission to the agent further comprises determining the predetermined commission function based on a predetermined variable associated with the order.

4. The method of claim 3, where the predetermined variable includes at least one of a territory, a distributor, the unique manufacturer, a commission percentage and the customer identification, the territory associated with a geographic area assigned to the agent, the distributor associated with the unique  
5 manufacturer for supplying the product, and the commission percentage being a factor in the predetermined commission function utilized to determine the commission.

5. The method of claim 1, where the predetermined commission function  
10 comprises a commission factor and the customer price, and where the providing of the commission to the agent further comprises retrieving an agent identification identifying the agent from a plurality of agent identifications based on the customer identification, and retrieving the commission factor based on at least one of the identified agent, a distributor of the product associated with the order, the customer price, and the unique manufacturer of the product.  
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6. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
identifying a distributor of the product from a plurality of distributors based on the customer identification;  
20 transmitting the customer information to the identified distributor;  
receiving an acceptance notification approving the customer information from the identified distributor.

7. The method of claim 6, where the customer identification includes a  
25 customer address, and where identifying the distributor is based on the customer address.

8. The method of claim 6, where the customer identification includes an account number, and where identifying the distributor is based on the account number.

5        9. The method of claim 6, where the customer identification includes a distributor identification, and where identifying the distributor is based on the distributor identification.

10      10. The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving the order from the customer visiting a site displaying information for the product, and wherein the communications network is a public access communications network.

15      11. The method of claim 1, wherein receiving the order further comprises receiving the order from the customer interacting with a manufacturer-specific site displaying information for the product, where the manufacturer-specific site primarily displays only products of a single manufacturer, and wherein the communications network is a public access communications network.

20      12. A method for placing a purchase order, comprising:  
receiving a request for an order via a communications network, the order including a product code and a customer identification, the product code identifying a product to be purchased, the customer identification identifying a customer;

25      retrieving a customer price for the product, the customer price being based on a predetermined pricing function that is associated with the customer identification;

identifying a distributor of the product from a plurality of distributors based on the customer identification;

transmitting the customer identification and customer price to the identified distributor;

- 5 receiving an acceptance notification from the identified distributor; and  
shipping the product to the customer after receiving the acceptance notification.

10 13. The method of claim 12, where the customer identification includes a customer location, and where identifying the distributor is based on the customer location.

15 14. The method of claim 12, where the customer identification includes an account number, and where identifying the distributor is based on the account number.

20 15. The method of claim 12, where the customer identification includes a distributor identification, and where identifying the distributor is based on the distributor identification.

25 16. The method of claim 12, where the customer identification further comprises an account number, the account number being associated with a distributor of the product or with a financial institution where the customer has a financial account, the predetermined pricing function comprising a product price associated with the product code and a mark-up factor associated with the customer identification, and the retrieving of the customer price further

comprising retrieving the product price based on the product code and retrieving the mark-up factor based on the account number.

17. The method of claim 12, further comprising providing a commission  
5 to an agent associated with a unique manufacturer of the product, the  
commission being determined based on a predetermined commission function.

18. The method of claim 17, where the providing of the commission to the  
agent further comprises determining the predetermined commission function  
10 based on a predetermined variable associated with the order.

19. The method of claim 18, where the predetermined variable includes at  
least one of a territory, a distributor, the unique manufacturer, a commission  
percentage and the customer identification, the territory associated with a  
geographic area assigned to the agent, the distributor associated with the unique  
15 manufacturer for supplying the product, and the commission percentage being a  
factor in the predetermined commission function utilized to determine the  
commission.

20. The method of claim 17, where the predetermined commission  
function comprises a commission factor and the customer price, and where the  
providing of the commission to the agent further comprises retrieving an agent  
identification identifying the agent from a plurality of agent identifications based  
on the customer identification, and retrieving the commission factor based on at  
25 least one of the identified agent, a distributor of the product associated with the  
order, the customer price, and the unique manufacturer of the product.

21. The method of claim 12, further comprising receiving the order from the customer visiting a site displaying information for the product, and wherein the communications network is a public access communications network.

5        22. The method of claim 12, wherein receiving the order further comprises receiving the order from the customer interacting with a manufacturer-specific site displaying information for the product, where the manufacturer-specific site primarily displays only products of a single manufacturer, and wherein the communications network is a public access  
10      communications network.

23. A method for ordering a product, comprising:  
receiving a product code, a customer location, and an account number from a customer via a communications network, where the product code identifies the product to be purchased, where the customer location identifies the location of the customer, and where the account number comprises a unique identifier associated with a predetermined pricing function;

retrieving a customer price for the product, where the customer price is based on the predetermined pricing function;

transmitting the account number to a preferred one of a plurality of distributors of the product for acceptance; and

if the account number is accepted:

providing a commission to a manufacturer's representative associated with a unique manufacturer of the product, where the commission is determined based on a predetermined commission function; and

shipping the product identified on the purchase order to the customer.

24. The method of claim 23, further comprising identifying the manufacturer's representative based on the customer location.

5        25. The method of claim 24, further comprising retrieving a previously-stored identification of the manufacturer's representative from a plurality of manufacturer's representatives, where the identified manufacturer's representative has an assigned territory associated with a zip code of the customer, where the customer location comprises the customer's zip code.

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26. The method of claim 23, further comprising identifying the manufacturer's representative based on an association with the preferred distributor.

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27. The method of claim 23, further comprising receiving an alternate account number if a rejection notification is received from the preferred distributor, transmitting the alternate account number to the preferred distributor, providing a commission to the manufacturer's representative and shipping the product to the customer if an acceptance notification for the alternate account number is received from the preferred distributor.

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28. The method of claim 23, further comprising selecting the predetermined commission function from a plurality of commission functions based on the identified distributor.

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29. The method of claim 23, where assigning the commission further comprises:

selecting the predetermined commission function from a plurality of commission functions based on the preferred distributor, where each of the plurality of commission functions comprises a plurality of commission percentages each associated with a corresponding one of the plurality of distributors, and where each of the plurality of commission functions comprises a product of the customer price and the commission percentage; and

calculating the commission utilizing the selected predetermined commission function.

30. The method of claim 23, further comprising retrieving a previously-stored identification of a commission percentage associated with the preferred distributor, where the predetermined credit function multiplies the customer price by the commission percentage.

31. The method of claim 23, further comprising receiving an identification of the preferred distributor from the customer, and where the retrieving of the customer price further comprises varying the predetermined pricing function depending on the identified preferred distributor.

32. The method of claim 23, further comprising retrieving a previously-stored identification of the preferred distributor associated with the customer location.

33. The method of claim 23, further comprising generating the predetermined pricing function as a product of a previously-stored product price associated with the product code and a previously-stored unique mark-up associated with the account number.

34. The method of claim 33, where generating the predetermined pricing function further comprises:

selecting the unique mark-up from one of a plurality of distributor-specific mark-ups associated with the preferred distributor, if the account number comprises a number for a customer account associated with the preferred distributor;

retrieving the previously-stored product price associated with the product code; and

calculating the predetermined pricing function comprising the product of the product price and the selected distributor-specific mark-up.

35. The method of claim 33, where generating the predetermined pricing function further comprises:

selecting the unique mark-up from one of a plurality of retail mark-ups associated with the product code, if the account number comprises a number for a charge account associated with a financial institution;

retrieving the previously-stored product price associated with the product code; and

calculating the predetermined pricing function comprising the product of the product price and the selected retail mark-up.

36. The method of claim 33, where generating the predetermined pricing function further comprises:

selecting the unique mark-up from one of a plurality of promotion-specific mark-ups associated with a special promotion, if the account number comprises a number for an account associated with the special promotion;

retrieving the previously-stored product price associated with the product code; and

calculating the predetermined pricing function comprising the product of the product price and the selected promotion-specific mark-up.

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37. The method of claim 23, where receiving the product code, the customer location and the account number from the customer further comprises receiving this information over the Internet from a manufacturer-specific website visited by the customer, where the manufacturer-specific website primarily promotes the products of only the unique manufacturer.

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38. The method of claim 23, wherein retrieving the customer price further comprises:

receiving an identification of the preferred distributor from the customer;

transmitting the account number to the preferred distributor, where the account number comprises a customer account number associated with the preferred distributor;

receiving an acknowledgment of the validity of the account number from the preferred distributor;

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retrieving a previously-stored product price associated with the product code;

retrieving a previously-stored distributor-specific mark-up associated with the preferred distributor;

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where the predetermined pricing function comprises the product of the product price and the distributor-specific mark-up; and

determining the customer price using the predetermined pricing function.

39. The method of claim 23, wherein retrieving the customer price further comprises:

retrieving a previously-stored product price associated with the product code;

5        retrieving a previously-stored retail mark-up associated with the product code if the account number comprises a charge account number associated with a financial institution;

where the predetermined pricing function comprises the product of the product price and the retail mark-up; and

10      determining the customer price using the predetermined pricing function.

40. The method of claim 23, wherein retrieving the customer price further comprises:

receiving from the customer a product quantity associated with the product code;

15      retrieving a previously-stored product price associated with the product code;

determining a quantity-specific mark-up associated with the product code;

20      where the predetermined pricing function comprises the product of the product price and the quantity-specific mark-up; and

determining the customer price using the predetermined pricing function.

41. The method of claim 40, where determining the quantity-specific mark-up further comprises receiving the quantity-specific mark-up from the manufacturer.

42. The method of claim 41, further comprising receiving an order approval notification from the manufacturer's representative.

5       43. The method of claim 41, where the identifying of the manufacturer's representative further comprises retrieving a previously-stored identification of the one of the plurality of manufacturer's representatives having an assigned territory associated with the customer location.

10      44. The method of claim 23, where the shipping of the product to the customer further comprises shipping the product from the unique manufacturer directly to the customer.

15      45. A method for ordering a product, comprising:  
receiving a product code, a customer location, and an account number from a customer browsing via a communications network a site of a unique manufacturer, where the product code identifies a product of the unique manufacturer, where the customer location identifies the address of the customer including a zip code, and where the account number comprises a unique identifier associated with a predetermined pricing function;

20      retrieving a customer price for the product, where the customer price is based on the predetermined pricing function;

transmitting the account number and customer price to a distributor of the product for financial verification;

25      receiving an acceptance notification from the distributor indicating financial verification;

retrieving a previously-stored identification of one of a plurality of manufacturer's representatives associated with each of the unique manufacturer, the identified distributor, and the zip code of the customer;

- 5 providing a commission to the identified manufacturer's representative, where the commission is determined based on a predetermined commission function; and
- shipping the product to the customer.

46. The method of claim 45, where assigning the commission further  
10 comprises:

selecting the predetermined commission function from a plurality of commission functions based on the identified distributor, where each of the plurality of commission functions comprises a plurality of commission percentages each associated with a corresponding one of the plurality of distributors, and where each of the plurality of commission functions comprises a product of the customer price and the commission percentage; and

calculating the commission utilizing the selected predetermined commission function.

20 47. The method of claim 46, further comprising generating the predetermined pricing function as a product of a previously-stored product price associated with the product code and a previously-stored unique mark-up associated with the account number.

25 48. The method of claim 47, where generating the predetermined pricing function further comprises:

selecting the unique mark-up from one of a plurality of distributor-specific mark-ups associated with the identified distributor, if the account number comprises a number for a customer account associated with the identified distributor;

5 retrieving the previously-stored product price associated with the product code; and

calculating the predetermined pricing function comprising the product of the product price and the selected distributor-specific mark-up.

10 49. The method of claim 47, where generating the predetermined pricing function further comprises:

selecting the unique mark-up from one of a plurality of retail mark-ups associated with the product code, if the account number comprises a number for a charge account associated with a financial institution;

15 retrieving the previously-stored product price associated with the product code; and

calculating the predetermined pricing function comprising the product of the product price and the selected retail mark-up.

20 50. The method of claim 47, where generating the predetermined pricing function further comprises:

selecting the unique mark-up from one of a plurality of promotion-specific mark-ups associated with a special promotion, if the account number comprises a number for an account associated with the special promotion;

25 retrieving the previously-stored product price associated with the product code; and

calculating the predetermined pricing function comprising the product of the product price and the selected promotion-specific mark-up.

5 51. The method of claim 45, wherein retrieving the customer price further comprises:

receiving an identification of the one of the plurality of distributors from the customer;

transmitting the account number to the identified distributor, where the account number comprises a customer account number associated with the 10 identified distributor;

receiving an acknowledgment of the validity of the account number from the identified distributor;

retrieving a previously-stored product price associated with the product code;

15 retrieving a previously-stored distributor-specific mark-up associated with the identified distributor;

where the predetermined pricing function comprises the product of the product price and the distributor-specific mark-up; and

determining the customer price using the predetermined pricing function.

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52. The method of claim 45, wherein retrieving the customer price further comprises:

retrieving a previously-stored product price associated with the product code;

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retrieving a previously-stored retail mark-up associated with the product code, if the account number comprises a charge account number associated with a financial institution;

where the predetermined pricing function comprises the product of the product price and the retail mark-up; and

determining the customer price using the predetermined pricing function.

5        53. The method of claim 45, wherein retrieving the customer price further comprises:

receiving from the customer a product quantity associated with the product code;

10      retrieving a previously-stored product price associated with the product code;

determining a predefined mark-up associated with the product code;

where the predetermined pricing function comprises the product of the product price and the predefined mark-up; and

determining the customer price using the predetermined pricing function.

15      54. The method of claim 53, where determining the predefined mark-up further comprises receiving the predefined mark-up from the unique manufacturer of the product.

20      55. The method of claim 54, further comprising identifying the identified manufacturer's representatives based on the customer location.

25      56. The method of claim 55, where the identifying of the identified manufacturer's representative further comprises retrieving a previously-stored identification of the one of the plurality of manufacturer's representatives having an assigned territory associated with a zip code of the customer, where the address of the customer comprises the zip code of the customer.

57. The method of claim 45, where the shipping of the product to the customer further comprises shipping the product from the unique manufacturer directly to the customer.

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58. A server system for generating an order for a product, comprising:  
10 a receiver component that receives requests to order a product and for receiving financial authorizations, a request including a product code that identifies the product and a customer identification that identifies a customer, and a financial authorization comprising an acknowledgment from a distributor verifying a customer account;

15 a data storage medium storing information for a plurality of products, including a customer price associated with each of the plurality of products, where the customer price is based on a predetermined pricing function, and where the predetermined pricing function is based on the customer identification;

20 an order placement component that retrieves from the data storage medium information for the identified product and that uses the retrieved information to place an order from manufacturer of the identified product; and

25 an order fulfillment component that completes a purchase of the product in accordance with the order placed by the order placement component.

59. The server system of claim 58, wherein the customer identification includes an indication of the distributor so as to identify the predetermined pricing function.

60. The server system of claim 58, wherein the customer identification includes a customer account number associated with the distributor.

61. The server system of claim 60, wherein the receiver component is  
5 further for receiving an account number acknowledgment from the distributor associated with the customer account number so as to identify the predetermined pricing function.

62. The server system of claim 58, wherein the data storage medium  
10 further includes pricing information associated with a plurality of distributors, and wherein the predetermined pricing function includes the distributor pricing information of the identified distributor in the customer price.

63. The server system of claim 58, further comprising a commission  
15 component that determines a commission and assigns the commission to a manufacturer's representative, where the commission is based on the order, and where the manufacturer's representative is associated with the customer identification.

20 64. The server system of claim 58, further comprising a commission component that determines a commission and assigns the commission to a manufacturer's representative, where the commission is based on the order, and where the manufacturer's representative is associated with the product.

25 65. The server system of claim 58, further comprising a commission component that determines a commission and assigns the commission to a manufacturer's representative, where the commission is based on the order, and

where the manufacturer's representative is associated with the customer identification and the product.

66. The server system of claim 58, wherein the data storage medium  
5 further comprises stored information associating a manufacturer's representative with a plurality of predetermined variables; and further comprising a commission component that determines a commission and assigns the commission to a manufacturer's representative based on at least one of the plurality of predetermined variables, where the commission is based on the  
10 customer price.

67. The server system of claim 66, wherein the plurality of predetermined variables includes at least one of a territory, a distributor, a manufacturer, a commission percentage and the customer identification.

68. The server system of claim 58, wherein the receiver component is in communication via a public access communications network with a site displaying information for the product, and wherein the order is received via the public access network.

69. The server system of claim 58, wherein the receiver component is in communication via a public access communications network with a manufacturer-specific site displaying information for the product, where the manufacturer-specific site primarily displays only products of a single manufacturer, and wherein the order is received via the public access network.  
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70. A server system for generating an order for a product, comprising:

a receiver component that receives requests to order a product, a request including a product code that identifies the product and a customer identification that identifies a customer;

5        a data storage medium storing information for a plurality of products and  
storing information for a plurality of agents associated with the product, where  
the stored product information includes a customer price associated with each of  
the plurality of products, where the customer price is based on a predetermined  
pricing function that is based on the customer identification, where the stored  
agent information includes at least one predetermined variable associated with  
10      each of the plurality of agents; and

15        a commission component that determines a commission and assigns the  
commission to one of the plurality of agents based on at least one of the plurality  
of predetermined variables, where the commission is based on the customer  
price.

15        71. The server system of claim 70, wherein the predetermined variable  
includes at least one of a territory, a distributor, a manufacturer, a commission  
percentage and the customer identification.

20        72. The server system of claim 70, wherein the data storage medium  
further comprises a commission percentage associated with each of the plurality  
of products, wherein the commission percentage is a rate for calculating the  
commission, and wherein the commission is based on the commission  
percentage.

73. The server system of claim 70, wherein the receiver component further receives a financial authorization that comprises an acknowledgment of the validity of the customer identification from a distributor of the product.

5        74. The server system of claim 70, further comprising an order placement component that retrieves from the data storage medium information for the identified product and that uses the retrieved information to place an order for the identified customer for the identified product; and  
an order fulfillment component that completes a purchase of the product  
10      in accordance with the order placed by the order placement component.

15      75. The server system of claim 70, wherein the receiver component is in communication via a public access communications network with a site displaying information for the product, and wherein the order is received via the public access network.

20      76. The server system of claim 70, wherein the receiver component is in communication via a public access communications network with a manufacturer-specific site displaying information for the product, where the manufacturer-specific site primarily displays only products of a single manufacturer, and wherein the order is received via the public access network.